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Kaer Darh



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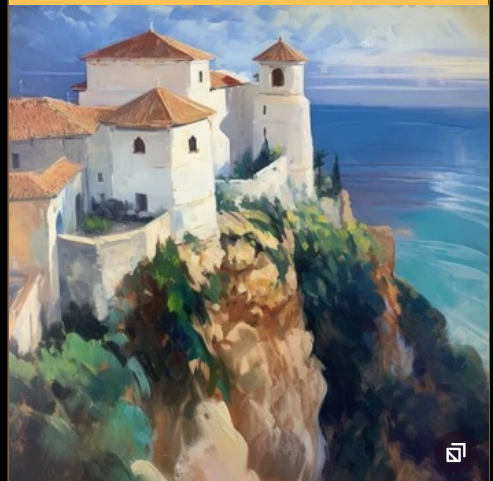
Kaer Darh (*Silk Islander Dialect: Home of the Birds*), or "**The Nest**" (as it is informally called by many of their inhabitants), is the fortress of the [School of the Crane](#), located in the Sachs Mountains on the island of Hawaiki, part of the [Silk Islands Archipelago](#) in the Silk Sea. It lies neither too far nor too close to the [Western Continent](#), specifically its [Eastern Coast](#), near the Nordling Confederation of Colonies known as [Fabiola](#).

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Kaer Darh



History

Builders	Dwarven colonists of the Silk Islands
Other Name(s)	The Nest
Founded	1380
Completed	Around August 11 of 1380

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Geographic Information

Location	Hawaiki, Silk Islands, Sachs Mountains, Fabiola
Region	Western Continent
Occupants	
Rulers	School of the Crane
Allegiance	School of the Crane Government of Fabiolan Colonies and Silk Islands (indirectly)



History



Main articles: [School of the Crane](#), [Putnam Pitch](#), [Jolanta Dinmarb](#).

The School of the Crane was founded in 1380/81 by [Putnam Pitch](#), a witcher from the [School of the Griffin](#), and [Jolanta Dinmarb](#), the last active member of the defunct [School of the Cat](#). The idea for the school was initially conceived by Putnam after his experiences battling aquatic and aerial monsters during his time in Skellige in 1276 and later gained traction during his period living in Kerack in 1290. However, the school only became a reality with the onset of Nordling colonization of the Silk Islands and the [Western Continent](#). The frequent attacks on ships by aerial and sea monsters revealed the need for witchers specialized in protecting the sea routes, motivating Putnam to found the School of the Crane.

Putnam then, recruited friends like Charz, Jabolet, and Roth to help establish the school. Charz became the sword instructor, Jabolet the mage responsible for witcher mutations, and Roth the blacksmith who crafted the medallions and swords. The school's symbol, the crane, was inspired by a tattoo worn by a former love of Putnam, the pirate [Kai Yih](#), symbolizing grace, wisdom, and protection.

Construction of Kaer Darh began in 1380, largely completed by mid-year, thanks to skilled Dwarven colonists who were hired for the project. The first adept of the school, [Stefan "The Crane"](#), was adopted by Putnam after a chance encounter at a slave market.

In 1381, Jolanta Dinmarb joined the school, becoming co-founder and co-leader. She played a pivotal role in shaping the school, contributing to its training methods and combat styles. As more children were brought in, many of whom were adopted by Putnam and Jolanta, the school grew.

By 1390, the school had signed the Witcher Reformation Act, document aimed at uniting the witcher guild and preventing the mistakes of the past, when members of the [School of the Fox](#) led by [Adalwulf of Aedirn](#) visited Kaer Darh. To this document, a code of conduct created by Putnam and Jolanta during this first ten years for the Cranes was added, the Codex of the White-Haired. The codex was particularly inspired by the values of the legendary Geralt of Rivia and was soon integrated into the school's teachings to prevent the corruption and downfall of other schools, like the [School of the Cat](#). After the codex was added to the Reformation Act, it was also incorporated by many other schools in both the Old and Western Continents.

By the 1390s, as suggested by Jolanta, Putnam commissioned the original builders of the fortress to add secret escape routes throughout Kaer Darh. These exits were designed to ensure that, in the event of an attack or siege, Crane Witchers could escape undetected or launch a counterattack.

Putnam and Jolanta led the school for decades, training several generations of Crane Witchers. In 1500, they officially retired, passing leadership to their adopted son, [Ucalt](#), who continued their legacy.

In 1510, Jolanta died, but Putnam's presence, despite his retirement, maintained the stability of the school. In 1555, Putnam passed away, marking the end of an era for the school. His death left a profound impact on the Cranes, particularly on his adopted children, leading to a brief period of internal struggle. However, the school's legacy continued under the leadership of those Crane Witchers adopted by Putnam and Jolanta, such as Stefan, who took the mantle of grandmaster for one year but later abandoned it due to grief. Later on, [Ezeld](#) took on the role of grandmaster until 1666, when he was succeeded by his brother, Uzoma, who held the position until 1700.

Location

Main article: [School of the Crane](#)

Kaer Darh is strategically placed in the Sachs Mountains, approximately three days' travel by horse from the main population centers of Hawaiki. This remote location ensures the fortress's security while allowing access to vital resources. The Tangaroa River, located nearby, originates from Mount Iska, and this point is about a day and a half's journey from the fortress by horse. The river is known for its dangerous creatures, including aquatic and aerial monsters, and jungle predators. The School of the Crane has incorporated this natural hazard into its training regimen, using the river for the Trial of Turbulence, a test of endurance, navigational skills, and combat abilities akin to the [Trial of the Mountains](#) in other schools. Candidates must navigate its tumultuous waters while defending against various threats before returning to Kaer Darh.

Kaer Darh is also two days' travel from the eastern port city of Putnam, a key hub for trade among the Silk Islands. Putnam's calm, sheltered waters make it an ideal location for ships arriving from the Old Continent and the Western Continent to either stop before continuing their journey or travel and trade with the other islands of the archipelago. This further enhances Kaer Darh's accessibility despite its remote position. The school's proximity to the coastline also allows for a 10-minute walk to a nearby beach by descending a long stone staircase. This beach is used for training exercises and ceremonies, such as funeral rites. On this beach lies the infamous "The Drownerer," the Crane equivalent to The Killer in the [School of the Wolf](#). The Drownerer consists of a path composed of sea platforms used by Crane witchers to train and improve their running speed and controlled breathing techniques. Its name comes from the treacherous sea moss, algae, marine fauna, accidents, and sea currents, which cause many to fall and drown. The beach also includes a small harbor and a lighthouse, modeled after the one in the city of Kerack, which serves as a navigational aid for nearby ships.

Self-Sufficiency

Given its distance from population centers, Kaer Darh is largely self-sufficient. The fortress includes its own farm and orchard, which provide meat, vegetables, fruits, and legumes for its inhabitants. The nearby coastline provides an additional source of sustenance, as fish are regularly caught using various traditional and modern fishing techniques. While most of the fortress's basic needs are met through local resources, non-perishable items and other goods are brought in from trading ships that pass through the Silk Sea and stop in Hawaiki.

The fortress's water supply is sourced from the mountain itself. As Kaer Darh is built atop an extinct volcano, the structure is situated over a natural aquifer, which provides fresh, potable water to the fortress. This reliable water source has allowed the fortress to remain independent and well-provisioned.

Architecture and Design

Kaer Darh's architectural style reflects the combined influences of [Vicovaro](#), Nordling colonial, and Dwarven war architecture, emphasizing both functionality and durability. Built atop an extinct volcano, the fortress uses natural defenses such as the surrounding cliffs and mountains to protect its inhabitants. The location, near the mouth of the Tangaroa River, mirrors to some extent the Griffin fortress of Kaer Seren on the [Old Continent](#), as both look out to the sea. However, Kaer Darh is not built at the sea end of a mountain range, as the Sachs Mountains are close to the sea, with one side facing the ocean and the other looking inland toward the island. The fortress, like Kaer Seren, is also constructed upon a confluence of magic—specifically Water Magic, unlike Kaer Seren, which draws on Air Magic.

The fortress's design is visually pleasant despite its simplicity, as well as resilient and practical. Kaer Darh is a multi-story fortress with five floors, including three underground levels. Its design takes advantage of the natural cliffside in which is located. The staggered arrangement of buildings along the cliff offers a multi-story layout, with towers and walls blending into the rocky terrain, making the fortress difficult to assault. In that sense, to a lesser extent, it was also influenced by the fortress of the School of the Fox, [Burov Mylne](#). The fortress is designed to house approximately 150 to 250 people, including Crane Witchers, trainees, support staff,

mages, and temporary visitors.

Above-Ground Floors

The above-ground portion of Kaer Darh contains the residential quarters, training areas, and the main hall. The towers and walls offer panoramic views of the surrounding sea and mountains, providing both defensive and observational advantages. The top floors house living quarters for the Crane Witchers, their trainees, and non-witcher or non-mage staff working in the fortress. These quarters also include the school library and the mages' residence, both located in one of the various towers that the fortress has. The grandmaster's living quarters, which are almost a residence in itself, are also located in one of the towers.

The lower levels include essential communal spaces, such as dining and training areas, common bathrooms, and common rooms. This part of the fortress also houses the Wall of the Fallen, where the names of deceased Crane Witchers are inscribed. Practical facilities, including the school's farm, orchard, barn, forge, armories, and warehouses that store weapons, food, and other supplies, are found here. Additionally, guest rooms available for visitors are also located in this area.

Underground Levels

The underground portion of the fortress consists of three floors, each serving a distinct purpose:

- **Main Laboratory, Secondary Nursery, and Area for the Deceased:** Closest to the surface, the first underground floor contains the main laboratory, the secondary nursery, and the area for the deceased. This is where Crane Witchers undergo the **Trial of the Grasses** and the Trial of the Dreams. The laboratory contains alchemical apparatus and compounds essential for the trials. The adjacent common room with bedrooms is where Crane Adepts who have undergone the trials are monitored. Nearby, the secondary nursery provides additional care, while the area for the deceased handles the preparation of the bodies of those who fail the trials. In accordance with the School's traditions, these bodies are cremated with full honors. A second and a third, smaller laboratories exist both in the mages'tower and the lower levels of the above-ground floors, used for research and experiments.
- **Backup Library:** Beneath the main laboratory floor lies the backup library, which houses copies of essential texts, historical documents, and other critical records. This secondary library ensures that vital information is preserved in the event of a disaster that might affect the main library above ground.
- **Aquifer Level:** The lowest underground floor connects directly to the aquifer beneath the fortress. This level provides fresh water and serves as a secure storage area for emergency supplies, including rations and tools. The aquifer level is highly secure, accessible only to senior members of the School of the Crane such as Elite Witchers and Grandmasters. Water is transported to the rest of the fortress using a sophisticated hydraulic system. This system is similar to the Nilfgaardian lead tanks, with inlet and outlet pipes and valves used to regulate the flow of water, which ensures the water (as well as its temperature) is directed to key areas of the fortress, such as the living quarters, baths, and kitchens. This level also contains emergency exits (including one that leads to

a secret port with a ship at the base of the mountain, even further down than the aquifer) which provides secret escape routes in case of an attack on the fortress.

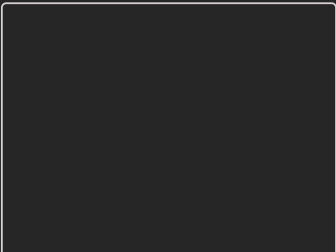
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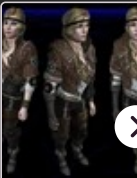
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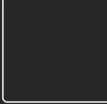
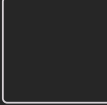

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